
Board of zoning appeals

Members present: Mia Divecha, Matt Eckholm, Sylvie Hyman, Katie Merten, Tom Weber
(arrived 6:03 p.m.), Jan Youngquist

Members absent: Jim Beneke

Staff present: Laura Chamberlain, Sean Walther

Applicant present: Jeremy Exley, Web Development

Chair Divecha welcomed new planning commissioner Sylvie Hyman.

1. Call to order – roll call

Approval of minutes – July 5, 2023 - The minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Hearings

3a. Amend and restate variances for 2625 Louisiana Ave. S.

Applicant: Web Development LLC

Case No: 24-24-VAR

Ms. Chamberlain presented the staff report.

Commissioner Weber asked if the variances are an extension of those that were already approved. Ms. Chamberlain stated yes, and noted the language is the same and the approval is the same and the only change is the expiration date.

Commissioner Merten asked if this is not approved, can the owner apply for a new variance. Ms. Chamberlain stated if the variance is denied, a resolution of denial would be required, and the decision would need to be tabled before a resolution could be created.

Commissioner Youngquist asked if any other changes are done administratively. Ms. Chamberlain stated yes, and added no PUD or CUP would be required and all other entitlements would be handled administratively.

Commissioner Youngquist asked if those items would have an expiration date as well. Ms. Chamberlain stated because those have not been approved yet, there would need to be zoning review first.

Official minutes

BOZA

June 26, 2024

Chair Divecha asked why this extension needs to be completed. Ms. Chamberlain stated there was an issue of timing of when the original variance went through and added when it was first approved, it was at the time of economic downturn, so there were concerns about the project. She added staff feels a two-year extension is appropriate for this project.

Commissioner Youngquist asked if the city is providing financial support for this project. Ms. Chamberlain stated no and noted if that were the case other city policies would apply for those entitlements.

Chair Divecha opened the public hearing.

Jeremy Exley from Web Development, the developer, stated he is available for questions.

Commissioner Merten asked why the project sat for so long. Mr. Exley stated they would have started two years ago, but the situation got worse and worse.

Commissioner Merten asked if the variance is approved, when will construction begin. Mr. Exley stated next spring.

Commissioner Merten stated she is concerned about the 66% and stated Mr. Exley knew this at the outset. Mr. Exley stated Louisiana Avenue climbs as you go north, and their building will be 5 feet below the street. He stated because of the topography there are concerns.

Commissioner Hyman asked if the building will reduce to 66%. Mr. Exley stated yes, we are asking to make it smaller, which is better for impervious surfaces and shadow.

Chair Divecha closed the public hearing.

Chair Divecha asked for staff to comment on the 66% vs. 80%.

Ms. Chamberlain stated this property is one of the first proposals within the MX1 district – mixed use district, which is to have street-oriented development and active street frontage and uses, with ground floor commercial and residential above. She stated the initial variance request to have the building be 66% of the street frontage vs. the required 80% is due to the change in elevation and the frontage itself onto Louisiana Avenue is a bridge. She stated due to this and where the parcel is located is why the this met the variance criteria in 2022.

Commissioner Weber stated two years ago when this came forward, the commission had given this its due diligence, and had lengthy conversations about the variances, and he is ready to approve the extension.

Commissioner Eckholm asked about drive aisle lanes. Ms. Chamberlain presented a slide showing the narrower drive aisle lanes within the parking lot. Commissioner Eckholm stated there is definitely enough room for vehicles to pass on these lanes, adding he has no concerns about the variances.

Mr. Walther stated a bit more space is required for parking and noted this does factor in and is allowed in C1.

Commissioner Youngquist asked if the reduction allowed for more space for screening to the single-family neighborhood to the east. Ms. Chamberlain stated yes as well as ADA accessibility, and a connection to the regional trail.

Commissioner Weber made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Eckholm, to amend and restate variances for 2625 Louisiana Ave. S. as recommended by staff.

The motion passed with one abstention. Commissioner Hyman abstained.

3. Other Business

4. Communications

Mr. Walther stated the July 3rd planning commission meeting is cancelled and there are no new applications that were submitted for July 17, so likely that meeting will also be cancelled.

Mr. Walther noted the city council took action on the final plat for Park Place East, north of Costco, and staff will be issuing building permits soon. He added there will be open houses for the zoning code updates, and the next one is Thursday, June 27 at Westwood Hills Nature Center from 6 – 8 p.m.

Chair Divecha asked about city council's redesign of the commissions and boards and if there has been any communication on that. Mr. Walther stated there were a number of boards and commissions being considered to be reframed, but the council decided not to make a change, so things are at status quo at this point. The focus now will be on how recruiting is accomplished. He stated also one of the feedback items was the disconnect between boards and commissions and council. He stated there will be a study session to discuss this further.

5. Adjournment – 6:27 p.m.